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Agnew Tells Farmers to Blame Press

Lancaster, Pa.

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew urged farm organizations last night to seek an end to hostility between food producers and consumers which he said was stirred up by "advocacy journalism."

In a speech at the Lehigh Valley Cooperative Farmers' annual meeting, Agnew said that some of the news media have "engaged in the shabby practice of portraying the entire food price problem as a battle between farmers and consumers."

"This is dead wrong and we should say so," he said. "What would help is a better understanding by consumers of the economics of farming and of processing and marketing as well."

Agnew said that producers don't understand the frustration of the housewife at the grocery store and the housewife gets angry when she is told that the farmers are to blame for high food prices.

"This dramatic controversy is grist for some of the media," Agnew said. "They play the game of advocacy journalism — choosing their side and developing their conclusions first and then hammering on whatever facts to support their preconceived conclusion.

"If the general public . . . is going to get the facts you're going to have to present them," he said.

He said farmers will have to get more consumer support than they have now.

"The public also needs to learn the weaknesses of controls — how they can dry up supply without satisfying demand — thus leading to rationing and black market activities," Agnew said.

You should take the lead in this educational endeavor. It's your income and your flexibility at stake," he said.

Associated Press